



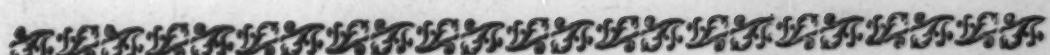
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CHURCH OF ENGLAND

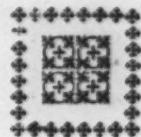
A N
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D E L I V E R E D I N T H E
A B B E Y - C H U R C H at *B A T H*,
O n T R I N I T Y S U N D A Y, M A Y 25, 1766.

By JOSEPH PARSONS, M. A. X

ISAIAH XLIX. 23.

Kings shall be thy nursing Fathers, and their Queens thy nursing Mothers.—
For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me, saith the L O R D .

N O N M A G N A L O Q U I M U R , S E D V I V I M U S .



L O N D O N :
Printed by J. and W. OLIVER in Bartholomew-Close ;
And Sold by J. RIVINGTON, at the Bible and Crown (N° 62) in St Paul's Church-yard.
M D C C L X V I I .



VI O I T O T H E
KING's Most Excellent MAJESTY.

DREAD SIRE !

Thath been the glory of Your Illustrious House to
I be the patrons and defenders of our happy Constitu-
tion, both in Church and State ; and Your own
bright example and devout attachment throws a dignity and
prevailing influence on the Form of Worship Established.

The humble Apologist for the Church of *England* can
no where, therefore, so properly and to good purpose, be
admitted to seek shelter, strength and weight to his feeble
Effort on Her behalf, as under Your benign candour and
august patronage.

The design, rather than the merit of the performance,
pleads for Your Royal protection ; and Your gracious con-
descension

D E D I C A T I O N.

descension in permitting this respectful approach, commands the most faithful and affectionate returns of gratitude and obedience; which cannot to better effect be expressed, than in fervent application to the King of Kings, to establish Your Throne in peace and splendor; to preserve the Congregation of Christians, under Your Majesty's peculiar care, in truth, unity and godliness; with one consent fearing God, loving one another, and paying all honour and dutiful allegiance to His Anointed over them ; and to crown Your sacred Person, Your most excellently accomplished and amiable Consort, and the flourishing hopes of our stability, with fulness of joy and blessing in this present state, till called to a distinguished immarcessible diadem, in the principalities and dominions Above.

So prayeth most earnestly,

May it please Your MAJESTY,

Your MAJESTY's most obedient

and firmly bounden Subject and Servant,

Joseph Parsons.

HEMENHALL,
May 18, 1767.



I THESS. V. 21.

Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.

QQ*QQ RE A T have been the impediments to the progress, ho-
G G nour and influence of our holy Religion, from the many
G G divisions and contests among its professors.

While one party is busied to preside, and establish some peculiar doctrine, form and model of worship; another taken up in supporting different pleas; duties absolutely essential and important are not so well inculcated; and Charity, the band and distinction of Christians, is broken, and swallowed up of contention.

Spiritual pride and cavilling, pettish censure and false zeal, with the covering of hypocrisy, start up and prevail against purity, meekness and love; the truth is evil spoken of, and perversely handled.

If this be the allowed and much to be lamented state of those who are listed under the banner of Salvation, to follow CHRIST in peace and truth, union and righteousness, yet forget and go astray from the end of their calling; how dangerous is our case, how threatening the symptoms? to engage every serious and thinking mind, to cast about to obviate these evils; and best secure the credit and interest of the profession we are named by; and maintain the peace of the community which protects us?

When the spirit of division is gone forth, when many separate, and labour to pull down our fences and strongholds, and perhaps

meet not, because hard to find, a proper restriction; how shall the godly and well-disposed, without great caution and warning, be able to stand, and preserve their Integrity?

Although it may be an Herculean labour, beyond human power, to redress all grievances of this sort; to prevent oppositions and disputings; to establish cordial union in faith and worship, holiness and love; yet may we not justly conceive, and lay it down as a rule to reach the heart, that all who call themselves Christians, and would be saved in their profession, are indispensably obliged, not willingly (and from whence can arise necessity?) to make or encourage separations in the family and household of God?

The blessed Apostles are recorded to have met with great difficulties in repelling the rage of dissention and confusion which began in their time to work; though endowed with power from on high; could determine, reprove and rebuke with uncommon clearness and authority; yet their preaching and labours did not always prevail with their disciples and hearers, *to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace*: How then shall it be now attempted with hopes of better success?

But if divisions will remain, doth it less concern every man to secure his own stedfastness?

The Author of my text, the great teacher of the Gentiles, (by a call from heaven set apart and appointed to the sacred office) in his Epistle to the Thessalonian converts, supposes different parties, and different opinions advanced; but he does not thereupon discourage us in our christian course; he more fitly directs how to proceed without detriment: he gives in charge carefully to examine the pretensions and merit of each party, not rashly espousing, or with too much haste decrying any doctrine: and after due deliberation, what we find good and approved, there to fix without wavering and doubtfulness.

We may and we ought to use our faculties to consult and enquire; but the result must be steadily to hold fast and pursue the information and truths we have received; not waver and fall from our stedfastness, or be "led away by the cunning craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive."

Prove

Prove all things, saith the divine writer, hold fast that which is good. Here is no secret election taught, nor want of power (in any man) suggested, to choose what pertaineth to salvation; but all are addressed to as capable of determining and embracing “the things which are for their peace.” The meaning however cannot be, that we should try and follow every path we may be directed to, and by whomsoever; there being deceitful guides, blind, incompetent, assuming teachers, too busy and ready to offer themselves to lead men to heaven.

To attend variety of directions would be the sure means never to arrive at that holy and happy place. The time which should be taken in the progress of our journey, would be unprofitably spent in search and enquiry after the way.

The plain and approved counsel is, that we adhere to the rule and pattern of faith, duty and worship, which was in the Apostles time delivered; and to our sincere and unprejudiced apprehensions hath to this day most reason and best authority to commend it.

Before we can prove a thing, or ascertain its merit, we must have some rule or evidence to weigh and examine it by; with sufficient light and power for a right determination. And, God be praised, we are well provided with rules and assistance, both to form our notions and guide our practice, and have ability to apply them, without having recourse to, or presumptuously expecting extraordinary, inward, and divinely infused light; and without having any absolute dependence upon the decrees and counsels of men; whatsoever infallibility they may without warrant claim and usurp.

The Author of our being hath given the light of reason to all men; a signature and law engraven on the table of their hearts; which heaven-born impression (not dimmed and polluted with lust, or sophisticated with vain arguing, but attentively consulted, without passion or prejudice, without the leaven of malice, or any evil ferment within) will rarely fail to point out what to approve or condemn; what ought to be pursued, and what with diligence to be avoided.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE

To this oracle in our minds, the Almighty of his goodness and wisdom hath been pleased to add the written rule and testimony of his Word ; a most sure and perfect word spoken, and through manifold signs and miracles, authorised from himself ; and by the sons of *Adam* to be recoursed to, with the aids of the former light, as the complete infallible rule of life and happiness ; and thus received and approved by the learned and wise of the generations past. By these standards then, the still voice of reason, and the guidance of holy scripture, must all our measures be adjusted, our judgments formed, and actions influenced.

And because there is great difference in the capacities, employments, and stations of men, all not being alike qualified, or having leisure for close and exact enquiry into the nature, extent and obligation of these abovenamed laws and rules of conduct ; though none can be bound, or rightfully required, to act contrary to their own clear reason and the plain Oracles of God ; yet in dubious, difficult, and less important cases, it is undoubtedly the duty, and for the benefit of the unknowing and inferior sort, to conform and be directed by their superiors ; who are in place and office for public good ; have time and ability for a more intimate search into the true state of human obligations, and may reasonably be presumed of understanding and integrity, counsel and attention, to give weight to their opinion and judgment.

These premises offered, and rules laid down, more generally allowed proper, than faithfully applied, to adjust misconceptions and differences ; and every man nearer concerned to be himself in the right, than to convince others of their error ; it seems especially material and for present edification, not so much to display and enlarge upon the principles and foundation of Christianity (or the great and mysterious doctrine of this solemn day) as to prove the profession, faith and worship, which we of the Church of *England* espouse to be good and praise-worthy, sufficient and well adapted to our salvation.

This we shall be glad to do, without giving just cause of offence to any of our adversaries ; should rather rejoice to win them over to the

the same duty and worship ; that with union of hearts and voices, GOD may be glorified, through our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the great captain and author of our profession.

When it is calmly considered that we have reason and the word of GOD on our side, and no very convincing arguments against us, but such as men of weak minds, selfish and sinful passions, under the influence of wild delusion, may suggest : reflection and judgment of this sort seriously admitted, may have the happy effect to conciliate and bring over to our communion those, who through prejudice and education, mistake and misinformation, false light and defective reasoning, have disapproved and avoided it ; and can surely do no less than firmly engage all, who say they are of us, attached to the same form of worship, to walk worthy their vocation in all godliness and meekness, peace and honesty ; and likewise to be stedfast and firmly united against all attempts from the prejudiced and deluded ; or from obstinate opposers to so excellent and well-founded an establishment : What, must the preacher be silent, if he speak not as angels, and utter things never heard before ?

It may indeed be difficult to say any thing new, or so well as hath been before delivered by word and writing, on this interesting subject ; yet it will not, we presume, be altogether unprofitable to stir up the minds of some by way of remembrance, and to excite others to examine and revolve the merit of the things they have been taught to profess.

Is not this of utmost moment, in these days of wavering and instability, when the members and ministers of the Church of *England* are so openly and busily attacked ? when mischievous and threatening agents on every side arise, to perplex and disturb us, to blast the beauty and weaken the strength of our Sion ? some by the machinations of spiritual tyranny, gross idolatry and vain superstition, using all kind of stratagems to overturn our happy constitution, civil and religious ; others, through the crafty aspirations of hypocrisy and wild enthusiasm, attempting to undermine.

10 AN APOLOGY FOR THE

mine and unsettle us; both from the same spring of malevolence to our flourishing state, present security and peace; and, above all, detrimental to our future hope.

A third sort engaged in the dark, boundless, and barren field of controversy, upon points inexplicable (wisely enveloped in clouds and darkness, to obstruct the impudent eye, to defeat the purpose of an impious malevolent and sensual heart; to set bounds, and command reverence and modesty, to the proud and daring understanding) therefore not concerning, or matter of human enquiry; endless questions which tend to strife, rather than edifying: or else, to as little purpose, busied in useless contention about the foundation, beauty and nature of moral obligations and duties; without a due zeal, by innocence, soberness of thinking and charity, to serve and obey the commands and plainly revealed will of the Lord our maker; in purity and peace, union and real godliness; all of them alike adversaries to truth and stedfastness, in the purity and intent of it.

Shall enemies thus use all methods and arts to confound, divide and destroy? and shall not friends be alarmed, and think it high time to associate and combine for union and safety?

We have need in this critical juncture to weigh and consider the strengths by which we stand, and never swerve from the way of truth and righteousness.

Is not the communion and way of worship we join in of moment? Is it not of importance, that we have fellowship with GOD and our SAVIOUR, and publickly own ourselves members of that society and body of which CHRIST is the head? Are not our souls, is not our all at stake, and upon the precipice of eternal ruin? And what can be the solid foundation of our hope, if we are not in the faith to lay hold of Him, who is the rock of salvation, and author of blessing and peace? if we walk not with them, who worship the Lord JESUS in sincerity and truth, to whom the promises are made, and heaven opened? If this be not of consequence to the sons of men, what is? To what more excellent

cellent and interesting purpose can all our faculties and attention be directed, than to be settled in a right faith, practice and worship?

They who neglect this great concern, whatever be their station and pretence, their life is a vain shew; they know nothing most needful for them to know; are led by purposes and views that cannot profit; their pomp and their splendor is but for a moment; and their judgment of no merit; for darkness and confusion encompass them.

If any have been so ill instructed as not to make it matter of conscience to join in the congregation of faithful worshippers of their supreme Governor and Judge on earth, how shall they hope to be admitted into the joys and presence of his saints in glory?

To help ourselves in this weighty search, that we may be guided by principle and knowledge, not vain illusions, or the fallacious arguments of assuming philosophy; or even the example of the proud and profane scorner, how high soever exalted; let us pause and recollect: What doth reason and the works of nature plainly teach? That there is a Being above all, author and preserver of the things which do exist: infinite in all perfections, and communicative of his fulness; hath therefore a right to the public worship, adoration and love of all, who can pay Him reasonable service.

Every one who thinks, and uses his mental faculties, must be convinced how necessary and immediate our connection and dependence, for life, breath, and all things comfortable and convenient, is and must be on this first original Parent and Cause of the world, and the inhabitants thereof; how incumbent and reasonable our inward gratitude and outward public veneration. None but the branded, and pointed to in the sacred records, as void of understanding; clouded with sensuality; puffed up with vain-glory; enemies to human and social peace; have failed to be unanimous in this assent. Who indeed but fools, the most deficient and viler sort of the human species (because senseless and ungrateful) can

can ever dispute the existence, or shew neglect of the great Giver and Support of their being? The liberal Bestower of the talents and blessings they abuse!

If their own shame doth not cover them, can they be held in honour, or have deference paid to their judgment, among those better enlightened and disposed, who are “lowly in their own eyes, make much of them that fear the LORD;” and are assiduous, by suitable outward behaviour, to give proof of their heart’s respect?

They who pretend to live without GOD in the world, or the public worship of a supreme Cause and Governor, can they be better accounted of than a distasteful generation, that set not their hearts aright; an offence and nuisance to the sober thinking part of mankind? Their heads command no esteem, and, for the most part, their actions and course of life are abominable.

How industrious soever some puny and malevolent dablers, bold and free-thinkers, but inaccurate and comfortless reasoners, may have been to represent the reverence of a supreme Being, as an argument of weak abilities and superstitious fear; hath it not more justly been celebrated, as the highest token of human understanding, in the opinion of most consummate and experienced judges, confirmed by the general suffrage of the best and most enlightened ages? *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding,* Job xxviii. 28. Eccles. xii. 13.

The wanton wit and effrontery of short-sighted licentious men can never overthrow; howsoever they may vilely attack, this impregnable and important fort, with all the artillery of malice, poisonous and bitter arrows.

But though the belief of a GOD, and the just tribute of worship due to him, be thus generally assented to and well supported, there hath not been the same agreement in the manner and method of keeping up holy intercourse with this supreme Power; “abundant in wisdom, goodness and majesty.”

Many who had improved the light of reason, convinced of a divinity and human obligations, were yet at a loss, and guilty of great

great mistakes, in this material point; run into most egregious errors of address to the divine power, not so much (as hath been suggested) from the contrivance and influence of man's policy, (which may have built upon, but never invented and laid the ancient foundations) as led by the tradition of their fathers, which through the channels they had passed, received different tinges, varying wide from the original spring.

To a pious well-disposed mind (not full of its own powers, or fond to advance opposition, novel and uncouth paradoxes) it may appear no groundless conception, but according to truth and fact, that all the idolatrous forms of worship that have existed, had their source from revelation, corrupted or misunderstood.

Among those who profess to own the authority of the Old Testament, is it not matter of surprize, that any should engage in controversy about the light and power of man, in his natural unrevealed state, when it does not appear, man ever existed without some degree of external and supernatural light?

As sure, and as soon as man was made, he had the will of his Maker, and what He expected from him, plainly revealed, and was not left to collect it from his own reasoning and reflection: how elegantly soever a poetic and refined imagination may represent.

Some of the wise sages of antiquity, not sufficiently apprized of the communications holy men of old were dignified with from Heaven; and contemplating the gross absurdities received, have declared a special revelation from thence needful to conduct men in their approach to, and worship of the living GOD.

The power and majesty, to whom divine honour is due, cannot fail to direct men to an acceptable and holy address: that must be a perfect model to frame and govern our hearts and minds, and external behaviour, which "cometh down from the Father "of lights, in whom we live, move, and have our being." This is the dictate and sentiment of human reason; and even our most precise adversaries acknowledge, or pretend to acknowledge, howsoever they misunderstand or pervert their meaning, that the holy scriptures contain the manifestation of the will of GOD; where

AN APOLOGY FOR THE

then is their ground for opposition, and separation from legal communion in holy offices with their christian brethren ; who aver to hold no doctrine, require no practice, and prescribe no form of worship, but such as the rules and authority from Heaven do appear, either directly or consequentially, to warrant and approve ?

Here it hath been unhappily urged, and is it not still insisted upon, (let the wise judge how pertinently !) that though the Word and Revelation of God be the declared rule of faith and worship in the Church Established, yet many rites and observances are retained, for which there is no express revelation.

Is it not sufficient that nothing be held contrary to the written Word, or insisted upon, as of equal obligation and weight ?

The divine Oracles were given to bring light and instruction in every good work ; is any work to be decried as evil, because not thereby directly pointed to ?

The light we have received from above, could not be designed to interfere with and set aside man's reason and natural powers, but to help and improve them ; these came from the same wisdom and counsel ; and in matters where the scriptures are silent, the determinations of reason, with the precedent of well-grounded and received custom, have just claim to regard.

It is a step to our vindication, and giveth no advantage to the adversary, that the things we retain, and are objected to, if not in scripture declared, are yet conformable thereto, and authorised by the usage of the Apostles and their nearest successors, and approved by the concurrence of many ages. But if we had neither precept or precedent to plead, what the Church of *England* requires from her members is of so respectable a nature, agreeable to the dictates of sober unprejudiced reason, well calculated for the advancement of piety, love, and decency ; that they who dissent, and oppose themselves, seem without excuse.

Their allegations and objections appear of so trifling consequence, that although through the indulgence of a mild and gracious administration, (by favour of Heaven, in the hands and council of a Prince, not less deservedly than greatly beloved) they may

may be exempted from human penalties for thwarting an excellent establishment ; yet it concerns them to lay to heart, how they can be justified before GOD, for separating from their brethren, to the breach of christian love and communion in holy offices ; also hazarding the peace of the state ; best kept up and preserved by respect to "Rulers, ruling in the fear of God ;" by unanimity, order and submission in them of low degree.

The whole creation is uniform, beautiful and regular ; its several parts adapted to one general purpose ; the setting forth the glory, goodness and wisdom of the Creator ; and will not the beauty of holiness and religious worship shine with greatest lustre, where the fullest harmony and union of minds and voices is seriously laboured after and preserved ?

Can any Society be maintained without government ? Shall there be no distinction, precedence and order, in the body and community of christians ?

If CHRIST be their head, hath he not constituted Rulers and Officers under him ?

Who are those that would level, whom GOD hath distinguished by his call, his gifts and operations ?

This wise distinction was by no means intended for private purpose, to set one man above another, to lord it over his brethren, but for the benefit of the christian society, which cannot so well be supported without subordination.

The ministrations and degrees of men, which appear by CHRIST himself to be ordained in his holy church, who hath power in our days to lessen and annul ?

Can insolence and calumny, or pretended inspiration, defeat the efficacy and power of their ministry, who are regularly and divinely appointed to be the messengers and ministers of salvation to the sons of men ?

Who, though they claim no infallibility and perfection, or empire over the minds of men, have yet surely a right to be respected, as the servants of GOD, specially devoted to be public guides in things pertaining to life and godliness.

In vain do they profess to believe Revelation (or the authority of the scriptures) who deny this.

Our preaching is intended only to them who fear God, acknowledge the manifestation of his Word and Will; and think themselves interested, under the christian banner, to follow truth, union and righteousness. By these we trust patiently to be heard.

Hath the government and authority of Bishops, and their care and assignment of Pastors over our several congregations and districts been objected to, and is still perversely opposed? Was it not the command of CHRIST, before he was glorified, that all nations should be baptized and taught to believe and obey the Gospel?

For the execution and fulfilling of this divine purpose, was not an order of men necessary to be publickly called and separated? The twelve Apostles, and seventy of his special Disciples, were appointed by our LORD himself, and during his earthly abode, to teach and make known the power and coming of his kingdom, and to prepare men to become the fit subjects thereof; and this when the civil powers in being opposed both him and his doctrine. CHRIST was the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Those whom he had called were, in different degree and order, officers and instruments under him, with power to spread and propagate his heavenly lessons, and win men to the love and obedience of holiness and truth.

When the great and faithful Master of the Flock had laid down his life for his sheep, and was gone into the heavenly places to prepare happy mansions for his steady adherents and followers; the burden and charge of his Apostles and substitutes was increased.

At his departure did he not devolve upon them like power and authority, which he had himself received; with a special promise of his peculiar and continued presence to them and their appointed successors, to enable them to execute it? And was began abundantly and evidently to be confirmed by the descent of the holy Ghost not many days after.

As the almighty supreme Father had sent HIM to be the Saviour and Instructor of the world; so He sends and authorises them to be witnesses of his resurrection and the glory of his power in Heaven,

ven, and of the gifts and offices he distributed on earth : and from these striking motives to invite and engage their disciples and hearers to seek happiness and life through Him that had been thus manifested to the world ; and to make public and settled provision, that upon their decease there might be always, to the latest ages, persons of the same holy function and employ.

How well they fulfilled this high calling and charge, may be collected from their *Acts* and *Epistles* publickly recorded ; and from the spreading success and continued establishment of Christianity. To which also agrees and testifies the practice of our Church, in appointing this day (*Trinity Sunday*) for one of the solemn seasons to ordain fit persons for the service of the sacred Ministry.

These divine preachers soon dispersed themselves through the borders of the earth, and believers in the Lord Jesus were multiplied in every place.

When by death or other occasion, the Apostle who had wrought the blessed effect of conversion, and bringing men to the christian obedience and faith in one place, was called and removed to another; care was taken by himself, or some other of the same dignity, for the appointment of a fit person to be left to forward the good work begun, and that there might be no want of a faithful and able instructor in righteousness and the truths of the Gospel.

Thus the great Teacher of the Gentiles reminds *Titus*, chap. i. 5. for what cause he left him in *Crete*, that he should “ set in order “ the things that were wanting, and ordain Elders,” (or Priests as the word may be rendered) “ in every city ;” as he had appointed him.

Plain are the directions given to *Timothy* and *Titus*, both invested with episcopal power and charge, one over *Crete*, the other over *Ephesus*, concerning the moral qualifications, doctrine and abilities, to be required in those appointed to instruct others in the christian faith, and terms of holy communion and fellowship.

That the first converts to the faith were at any time or place left without a regular Shepherd and guide, or had it recommended to them, or even conceived it to be in their power and option to choose and ordain to themselves Teachers, can hardly be proved by any

any instance from scripture or antiquity; nor do we find that any gifted man, in the language of modern times, ever presumed to take upon himself such distinguished office, without manifest tokens of divine commission and power, or apostolical approbation, by imposition of hands and prayer.

In the charge to *Timothy* it is mentioned, 2 Epist. chap. iv. that “the time would come, when hearers, having itching ears, after their own lusts should heap to themselves Teachers, and turn away their ears from truth, and be turned unto fables:” and the reason of their revolt and schism was, “because they would not endure sound doctrine;” are therefore fore-marked, and condemned, not set forth as precedents to follow.

What shall we say, to see these prophetic Scriptures fulfilled; and men of forward factious principles, of a private and petulant spirit, to arise to the disturbance of public decency, union and order? who from the workings of a wild imagination, or the corruption of a perverse and evil heart, thrust themselves presumptuously into this sacred office; spread doctrines subversive of truth and real righteousness; and under pretence of saving and converting souls, lead many to perdition? Deceivers have been and are in the world, of whom it concerneth the godly and wise to beware, and take in good part the endeavours of those who warn and admonish them.

To what effect can a man preach and baptize, officiate and execute a commission in things spiritual and belonging to God, unless he *be sent*? We have both direction and precedent, that “no man take this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was *Aaron*,” Rom. x. 15. Heb. v. 4.

Is not the charge of sending forth Gospel Ministers wisely, as was originally, committed to the Overseers in CHRIST, men of approved knowledge and piety, consecrated to this special purpose by laying on of hands and prayer, in undoubted succession from the Apostles, the first Planters and Governors of the Christian Church; and have sanction and endowment from the civil powers in being, freely and honourably to execute this high office? It

It may be easily traced from whence opposition to this sacred order hath sprung, but very difficult to prove, that in ancient times any congregation of Christians disclaimed connection or dependence on those substitutes, according to the will of CHRIST the head, appointed to have the rule over them.

And is there not room with regret to say, that in these latter days dissidents appear to have arisen; not so much influenced by the dictates of a sincere conscience, or the genuine lessons of Revelation and sound Reason, as led and carried away by caprice and vain enthusiasm, evil passions and lusts, or the views and interests, the crafts and policies of a designing world?

If the ordaining Ministers (inspection of their doctrine and behaviour, assigning their cures, with power of censure) be the sphere of episcopal power, to what can we better refer the manner of their ministration in things sacred, than to the direction of the same power?

Can it be judged fitting that the subject, form and manner of our public Offices in the service of GOD, should be left to the immediate conception and utterance of any particular Teacher? Would he not be apt to pour forth things belonging to himself, or to those who from a spirit of opposition, delusion and vanity, pay and encourage him; rather than what suits the occasion, and may be for the edification and fervour of others?

Can any man, without much presumption or a better light than hath in our days been manifested, judge himself capable and sufficient to address the Almighty in the solemn acts of his worship, without great seriousness and preparation of mind?

Is not praying with the understanding, memory and heart, a more probable means to have the Holy Spirit accompany and help our infirmities, and plead for us at the throne of grace, than speaking as one that babbles, under the illusion of a vain and wild imagination? Shall the most high GOD be drawn nigh unto without veneration and respect, with such confusion and noise, words without meaning, vain repetitions, if not reproach and blasphemy, to be heard in our modern Tabernacles? Is not our application to heaven in the solemn assembly best committed to the judgment of those of highest repute and order in the Church?

The

The form of public prayer and worship received among us was not only judiciously drawn up and composed in conformity to scripture doctrine, pattern and rules; established by the wisdom and authority of Bishops, as likewise confirmed and enjoined by the statute laws of our country, but is in itself an excellent reasonable service: liable to no just objection in candor, truth and soberness.

Do any need at this time of day, doth the wild and novel turn of the age make it needful to be convinced, how pious and reasonable the Church of *England* Service is? How wisely it provides for uniformity of worship? Let them but candidly and carefully read our office book.

Are not the prayers well adapted to give right apprehensions of GOD our Creator, JESUS CHRIST our Redeemer, and the HOLY GHOST our Sanctifier; and properly expressive of the deficiencies and cravings of man, his creature and workmanship?

What but prejudice and weakness of judgment, want of consideration, or perverse opposition, a fondness for grimace and novelty, can move any to plead for the extempore effusions usual in our new collected assemblies, as preferable to such solid, devout, and well-worded compositions?

A previous sense and conviction of our wants and necessities, of the matter and importance of our prayers, and of the power and wisdom of the Great Object we address, is of mighty consequence, to make our devout and solemn service effectual to the glory of God and our own salvation: and for this are we not provided with an affecting authorised Book, to be digested at home, that our attendance in the house of GOD may be the more prepared, rational, and perfect? Every point concurs to prove the excellency and wisdom of our ecclesiastical establishment. I shall crave leave to mention one thing more.

Hath not our Church due regard for the edification and improvement of the members of her communion in all Christian Knowledge?

Is it with truth and reason suggested, that there is better instruction, and the power and effects of the holy Spirit more visible among revolting Sectaries, than in Church Societies and Assemblies?

There may be many hypocritical pretenders; but (whatever be the boasts of our itinerant preachers) few, I fear, have advanced one jot the

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

21

the more in Christian perfection by their opposition to, and separation from the establishment.

Time and experience have already begun to discover, and doubtless will bring further to light, the wild presumption and mistakes of our modern Enthusiasts; and fully evince their principles and pretences to be both pernicious and fallacious, and their practices grossly obnoxious.

Their own Journals and Writings afford no testimony in their favour. If the Leaders through a vain and lying spirit have gone astray, is it to be wondered at that their perverted and ignorant Followers will not hearken to the truths which should convert and save them from the destruction of their own delusion?

Where are we infallibly to go but to the Oracles of God for the words of eternal life? Are not the holy Scriptures the fountains of saving knowledge? Do they not contain the discourses and facts of Christ and his Apostles, by which thousands were converted and brought over to the faith? Can any method be more effectual for edification, and to minister grace to the hearers, than to hear the doctrines and precepts of Christianity publicly and distinctly read; (not with a drawling and canting tone, as the manner of some is, to catch the weak and vulgar, but with proper and manly emphasis pronounced) as they delivered them, who indeed "spake with authority, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?"

From these evident and commanding lessons of truth and godliness, shall we turn away to follow the frothy delusions of men; who, beyond measure or convincing proof, exalt themselves? whose call, whose spirit and forwardness, it is hard to know whence it is, unless by the crude unintelligible notions about the *New Birth*, *Experience*, *Justification*, *Feelings*, *Impulses*, *Affurances*, and other prejudices they instil, altogether detrimental to true piety, order and love; with the manifold heart-burnings and divisions they notoriously kindle in Parishes and Families; we may conclude their working, travelling and labour, not to be of God: howsoever plausible and specious it may appear to their poor perverted hearers, or be interpreted by their own vain and intoxicated minds.

Can we, my Brethren, I speak as unto wise men, serious, and in
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their right minds, can we too cautiously guard against those who, led by a wild unruly spirit, and travelling in the transports of enthusiastic zeal, spread forth confusion, disobedience to Governors, and every evil work, under pretence of reformation and purer godliness; and publicly decry the instituted Ministry and Ordinances of our Christian profession?

Have we not the seal and testimony of an Apostle and messenger of the LORD, 2 Tim. iii. 15. that the scripture is “able to make wise unto salvation; is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?” Is it then a dead letter, a sealed cover, which cannot edify and inform, but by Preaching and Methodist disclosing; or some inward illumination and feeling, and special demonstration of the Spirit; as our new adversaries, intermeddling and bawling strollers, vainly propagate.

Shall God, or man by his inspiration and authority, write, and the writing not to be understood? Must the understanding and heart be miraculously affected and opened, before it can feel and know the contents and interpretation of the divine message? Are the natural powers of no use? Have these self-illuminated men the only true key of saving knowledge?

Extraordinary illumination may be necessary to explain mysteries and to apply prophecies, Luke xxiv. 45. but not to discover the practical doctrines and duties of Christianity, so far as is needful to each man’s salvation; which he that runneth may read, and a child know enough of the holy scriptures to be made wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15.

Besides the written Word weekly sounded in our congregations; have we not learned, regular and godly Preachers, properly and publicly ordained; is not *this Day*, as before observed, specially set apart, that there might not be wanting fit persons to set forth, explain and enforce these Scriptures, the Word of God, upon the minds of the people? It is not then for want of the means of knowledge and of the fear of God, that many go astray and seek after novelties. Is it not rather through weakness of head, corruption of heart, the instigation of Satan, or some lure from the world, or their connections in it, that any turn their backs on the true light offered in our solemn assemblies,

assemblies, to run after the false glare and wild illuminations in too many places now exhibited ?

We may appeal to the impartial and judicious, whether the Discourses among us have not merit to deserve attention, and sufficient to enrich the Soul with saving knowledge? and if good example will sway, whether there are not to be met with in our communion many religious, sober and orderly livers; who do indeed adorn the doctrine of CHRIST by the soundness of their faith and purity of their morals, extensiveness of their good works, and charity; feeling the power and warmth of godliness at the heart; not wearing only the form of it?

If any call themselves of the Established Church, and are found profane, profligate and immoral, it is an invidious and unjust insinuation, that our communion gives license to Sin: such belong not to us, nor will any true Church of GOD acknowledge connection with them, till they reform and amend.

The wicked, of whatever denomination or sect, who obey not the Gospel precepts, cannot be of the Gospel communion, but rather of the synagogue of Satan; though they bow down to the Pope's Infallibility, or are dupes to the delusions of the most presumptuous modern enthusiast.

The time would fail me to mention every particular, nor would I weary your pious minds, to shew the unreasonableness of separation from our communion. Permit me only further to remind you, and observe, that the more our ecclesiastical constitution is enquired into, the stronger inducement shall we find for stedfastness in our profession, and to make it strict matter of conscience to conform our worship, our lives and demeanour, agreeably to the wise and holy rules thereof.

It hath Reason, Scripture, with the opinion and practice of the first and purest ages of Christianity for its foundation; and the assent and approbation of our Governors, to silence unreasonable opposers. It owns no doctrine necessary to Salvation but what is plainly revealed; where the Oracles of GOD are silent, it requires obedience and attention to those set over to teach and admonish us.

Is not submission to the higher powers express matter of duty, necessary to preserve decency and order? besides reverence and respect due to our spiritual Governors, will not regard to social peace and

union have weight with the well-instructed and humble, to engage their conformity, where sin lieth not at the door of such prudent compliance?

If the mildness and wisdom of human government, the hardness of mens hearts, or the perverse run of evil times, may occasion connivance, or public indulgence to Nonconformity with what is established, it doubtless aggravates rather than extenuates their offence, who walk disorderly under the winning motives of love and tenderness, and will not be prevailed on to comply with the civil and religious maxims of the community where they live, when no law of God interferes, but rather enforces subjection.

Doth not the Almighty prefer obedience, peace and love, to the most costly and sublime sacrifices? Will he not accept a suppliant with dispositions of this sort? A heart fraught with penitence and meekness, humility and benevolence, in a less perfect way of devotion; rather than were he full of himself, high-minded, prompt to disobey and make differences among christian brethren, through a pretence of addressing God in a purer and more spiritual manner?

Setting up and encouraging separate assemblies and discordant modes of worship, comes little short of the guilt in multiplying the objects thereof; occasions, at least, confusion and distraction in the minds of many; carries them from the main point of pleasing God, and in singleness of heart following holiness, peace and love; and furnishes some with excuses for Infidelity and Atheism.

So many are the differences and various the persuasions among those who profess Religion, that they pretend a difficulty to know where to fix; and by joining steadily in no society for worship, are by degrees led to a total neglect of God, and even the appearance of Religion; if they mix not with the profane and scoffers, and run into every levelling and confounding measure.

Hence arises that inundation of Profaneness and rampant Libertinism, dissolute, desperate, and riotous disturbances, which threaten the overthrow of all social bounds, and sap the foundation of all righteous government.

Where is no fear and true worship of God, there must be confusion and every evil work. Honour is a bubble, carried away with every

every puff, in a mind barren of religious impressions ; it can be no stay to human tranquillity in social or private life. Laws and Government have their chief strength and support from the terrors and motives of the world to come.

And who must answer for the bitter devestation and mischiefs to follow the overthrow of these sacred bounds ; the scenes of misery to be introduced in our present state ; and the sorrows of a long eternity to be encreased to them whose hearts admit no control, and are desperately bent to do evil ? Who doth not shudder at the thoughts of such immense desolation ? And shall not they lay to heart and consider, who directly and openly, by conversation and writing, propagate Infidelity and Irreligion ; or through a mistaken zeal dissent from the Established Worship, and are found busy in making divisions, and unsettling the minds of the ignorant and unwary ?

Could the thinking part of Christendom, instead of vain debate and striving to lessen the credit of each other, be prevailed upon with one consent to seek more the honour of their great Master in Heaven, and the peace and welfare of their fellow members of the same body on earth, and to court less the favour, or to be dupes to the political pursuits and schemes of this world, we might soon hope to see a different face of Religion, and more christian charity to abound.

Were we to trace the original and progress of all the corruptions, disputes and differences, that have arisen on that score, it might possibly appear that the sincere, undesigning and worthy, have been all along made the tools of artful and ambitious men ; who were far from having the interest of Piety and Virtue at heart, and played their policy to divide the body of Christians ; that by setting them one against another, and engaging them in disputes and contentions about the way to Heaven, and the doctrines and forms of their worship ; they might not have will, or leisure, or strength and compactness to attend, and afford any obstacle to the wicked imaginations of the imperious and ungodly, whose minds were bent not upon any good, but to compass avaricious, wily, and destructive purposes ; and to establish their own tyranny in their several districts of power.

Would men be wise in their generation, and take true pains to regulate

regulate and reform their own minds ; to subdue their passions, and rectify their views, and divest themselves of selfish forwardness, to get the name and lead of a party ; there would be little contention, much more true religion, and genuine zeal in serving GOD, and doing good each man to his neighbour.

Where the love of GOD is in the heart, and a desire of peace and harmony among men prevails, there cannot be any petulant stiffness to oppose what our superiors recommend and establish.

It may well be presumed that what is publicly ordained hath been well examined, and proved good for the community to hold fast, to be preferred in conscientious regard, beyond the dictates of private reasoning and judgment.

If then our rule and worship be in the way of salvation (and what adversary can prove otherwise?) and hath the sanction of Government, why should we seek another ? we may miscarry by forsaking it; and are sure to accomplish the consummation of our bliss by walking steadily therein.

Can we be more than happy ? They that wander in strange paths, cannot easily know the end of their journey.

Follow not every Guide, for there are many deceivers who offer themselves : he that is wise, will *mark and avoid them* (as the blessed Apostle directs) *who make divisions* in the Christian Community ; a Community where all should be as one, loving GOD and serving one another, abstaining from the least appearance of discord and evil.

We have been long ago instructed, that "the kingdom of GOD," or state of the Christian Church in this world, "is like unto a field "where good seed is sown, but the enemy cometh and soweth "tares."

To close all.—If the attacks of enemies on every side, the known and open assaults from Popish emissaries, and the delusive methods of petulant and daring Enthusiasts, will not awaken and move ; regard and affection to the safety and flourishing condition of the state wherein we live, should have weight to inculcate union and stedfastness in one approved faith and worship.

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The kingdom of this world, no less than the Kingdom and Church of CHRIST, are upon the firmest and most happy basis, where divisions and separations do least multiply.

They are enemies to Government, to Society, to the Cross of CHRIST, who are turbulent, self-willed, petulant, unruly and given to strife, whatever mask of meekness and piety they may wear.

Under the gentle, plausible and humble terms of tender consciences, weak persecuted brethren, soul-assurance of Salvation, and fair pleas of better edification, have we not known vain head-strong and evil-hearted men comprehended, stirring up confusion, and who will yield to nothing but in their own way, and boast themselves as zealous servants of the L O R D, in doing the most abandoned works of darkness*?

From whence must the flame arise that burns only to consume peace and unity, order and love among brethren? It cannot be kindled from Above, but is surely set on fire of Hell, and carries to the dark regions those who admit and receive it, strange delusion! as a passport and assurance of bliss.

To add no more: the result of what hath been humbly offered to your consideration, clearly amounts to this.—That our profession and way of worship will bear examination, hath arguments sufficient to prove it good, pious, and reasonable; and give it the preference to any opposition, which may arise from perverseness and prejudice, from low and worldly interest, or the suggestions of the wicked One; who doth evidently work in the minds of the disobedient, upstart and refractory: He fell himself through vanity and an aspiring spirit; his children are manifest by their enmity to union, just dominion and rule.

What then remains, but in the spirit and language of the Apostle, to “ hold fast our profession without wavering:” and to demonstrate ourselves found members, true sons of the Church Established, real friends to the Government, lovers of a Prince that loves and seeks the happiness of his people, by a zeal for union in all godliness, through

* See CLARENDON's *History of the Rebellion*, and examine the conduct of our modern Reformers thereby.

through constant and devout attendance on our public religious offices; as the best means to be built up in faith and loyalty, holiness and peace; that our adversaries beholding our good works, in a conversation becoming the Gospel, with the order and uniformity of our worship (which was delivered down to us at the expence and blood of our forefathers, and wherein are we wiser than they?) may be moved to say, that our calling is of GOD.

But if we cannot be so happy as to conciliate and add proselytes to our Communion, or to recover them that are gone astray, we have ground for our own good hope, that an exact and peaceable conformity to a Society so well constituted on earth, will not fail to introduce us to CHRIST's holy Church triumphant in Heaven.

To which GOD of his goodness bring us all, through the Captain and Author of our profession, CHRIST JESUS the Lord; to whom with the Father and holy Spirit, three Persons and one GOD, be rendered honour, praise, obedience and uniformity of worship, henceforth and for ever. AMEN.

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